

Sermon

- ◆ **First Reading:** *Wisdom 6:12-16*
- ◆ **Second Reading:** *1 Thessalonians 4:13-18*
- ◆ **Gospel:** *Matthew 25:1-13*

The parable of the 10 bridesmaids and their lamps is another interesting parable ; the following is an interpretation of the parable (...have you read it yourself privately and slowly?...) the 10 bridesmaids represent BELIEVERS like you and me ; the bridegroom is Jesus the Saviour ; the slumber/drowsiness of the 10 bridesmaids conveys the spreading of sin or the temptation to sin (..and WHO among us has never been tempted to sin?..) ; the OIL in the lamps may represent our good works along with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit ; the 5 bridesmaids' refusal to hand over their oil is not so much a case of WON'T but CAN'T, IT IS NOT THEIRS TO GIVE, explain please!! We cannot give our good works nor the Holy Spirit to others, such gifts are not transferable ; In other words, in the course of the years and decades the many efforts that each of us has made in doing good and in getting closer to our eternal salvation CANNOT BE JUST TRANSFERRED OVER TO SOMEONE ELSE!

IF you and I allow our oil of gladness and holiness towards salvation, if we allow that oil to dry up or run out from within, then we have no one else to blame but ourselves ; the 5 bridesmaids who needed more went off, we read **THEY HAD GONE OFF TO BUY MORE OIL WHEN THE BRIDEGROOM ARRIVED, THOSE WHO WERE READY WENT IN ;** now here comes the frightening part **THEN THE DOOR TO THE WEDDING HALL WAS CLOSED!!!!!!** The other five arrived late and were not admitted. The stark warning/message is contained in the last line, Our Lord says **SO STAY AWAKE, BECAUSE YOU DO NOT KNOW EITHER THE DAY or THE HOUR**

How many warnings does a person need in order to avoid a complete slumber to the sacred eternal things of God? How would you respond to someone who emphatically states "religion!!, naw!!, gave up on that years ago, I couldn't be bothered with all that holy stuff!!, live an' let live!!, that's what I say..." ;

Do such people, with this sort of attitude, realize that some fine day they will have to render an account of their lives? “or maybe” says you “it’s best to leave them alone and let them get on with their dried up spirituality, maybe the Holy Spirit has another plan for them..”yes!, I hope so.....

Returning to the parable, I wonder what it would be like to have the door to enter Heaven closed to you or to me on our arrival?, then to hear a voice from the other side saying **SORRY! NO ENTRY, YOU ARE NOT KNOWN HERE !!**

At the end of a burial, also at the end of a service in a crematorium I usually remind the participants that the gift of life comes only once and we should make the best of each day because we do not know when death may strike, as the saying goes **LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL BUT FRAGILE.....**

By this time last year here in the U.K. there was little mention of the Covid-19, it “wasn’t taken seriously!” ; now here we are a year later and look at the mess we are in, death from this virus is widespread, unbelievable!! A few warnings were given in January, another seven weeks passed, the situation became, as I would put it “DEADLY”, the first lockdown commenced. We now live surrounded by warnings and instructions in order not to pick up the Covid-19 ; a WARNING, in this context, is of course to protect each of us from a killer virus (...God-between-us-and-all-harm....)

In like manner, when Our Lord presented parables such as that of the 10 bridesmaids, He had in mind to avert the eternal loss of souls ; a WARNING has two options, to be taken seriously or to be ignored ; if all of us ignored the warnings of the presence of a killer virus in our midst, then perhaps most of humanity at this stage would be DEAD ; later on regret would be expressed “OH! WE SHOULD HAVE TAKEN THE WARNINGS SERIOUSLY, NOW IT’S OUT OF CONTROL”(but thankfully it’s NOT out of control!) ; so also if Our Lord’s warnings are not taken seriously, then eternal spiritual regret may come our way, and Our Lord takes no delight in losing souls ;

Very briefly from the parable, may you and I always be ready for the lord, enjoying his favour, in a state of grace, prepared with our good works in tact, and more so to have an interior longing for to enter Heaven ; **LET US KEEP OUR LAMPS BURNING BRIGHTLY FROM WITHIN**, and there’ll be nothing to be afraid of

.....stay healthy.....

P.S. another Lockdown, when is it ever going to end??... there are enough issues around the anxiety of job-loss and consequently “to have enough bread n’ butter on the table” ; but the issue of isolation and loneliness brings it’s own emotional pain, and there are many in this huge city who go back to an empty flat/apartment/house ; which do you think is more painful, the “bread n’ butter issue” or that awful DOWN feeling of loneliness??, I would say that LONELINESS has the greater impact on a person’s wellbeing(talk to a homeless person, and you’ll get first hand information on what it means to be lonely) ; lets’ look out for those who are down with loneliness during this Lockdown, such people are not far from any of us, we see them, thinking that “someone else” is taking care of their emotional needs, we may be disastrously wrong ; Perhaps you or I could step in and be that “someone else” ; it costs nothing to stop an’ say “Hello there, How are things?”, LET’S TRY IT MORE OFTEN.....be well....

Fr Kieran A. Fitzharris SVD